29 January

In perfect condition for work, for conversation . . . for anything at all. The annoying thing is that one is in form for everything at the same time, or for nothing. This morning, if I were to shine shoes, every stroke would be a stroke of genius.

At the offices of the *Revue blanche:* Bauer, Capus, Mirbeau, Andre Maurel, Alex. Natanson, Gheon.

Bauer talks like a man who owes to his dimensions the respect with which he is listened to. He ends each one of his sentences, looks now at one, now at another, and directs his words to each one of us specifically. His hand stresses his words with gestures, but his fingers stick tight together as in a mitten; his eye likewise remains expressionless.

Capus talks intelligently, distinctly, in half-sentences that are enough.

Mirbeau is excessive, brutal, and succulent like his articles, and stupid like them.

The *Memoires* of Cardinal de Retz. It is a long time since I have tasted such a joy. Strange style that seems made up entirely of substantives and verbs, and that walks on its heels. Related at one and the same time to Montesquieu and to Saint-Simon, but with more tight elegance than the latter.

1 February

Yesterday, with Em. to the Anatomical Museum and the Museum of Paleontology; pursued by the remark of the Goncourts: "At the Jardin des Plantes , . . very little outlay of imagination on the part of the Creator. Far too many repetitions of forms among the animals." (/otir-

The pettiness of a mind can be measured by the pettiness of its adoration or its blasphemy. Truly, those minds understood nothing about

God. This ceases to be atheism and becomes sheer stupidity. Fancy being disappointed at not finding more absurdity! Seeking, and regretting not finding, a greater number of forms where those that exist *suffice;* where adaptation tends toward simplification, toward an ever greater partial standardization; this is the way beauty is slowly acquired. To be unable to admire economy, the suppression of the useless, as much as one would have admired fantasy, the inappropriate, and the gratuitous. . . . Sure indication of a limited intelligence that perceives only details, does not go beyond them, and, thinking it is composing, merely juxtaposes.

There is nothing more *illuminating* than to go from the hall of paleontology to the hall of comparative anatomy. Why do species disappear? . . . There is always a reason for their doing so. How many odd, irra-